

South Fork folk denounce plans to open a campsite

By Sheridan R. Hansen 8-26-88
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PROVO — Before too long, what has been described as "the most beautiful canyon in the state" may be open to the public if Provo City and Utah County officials have their way.

But South Fork residents aren't too happy with the idea.

"Would you be happy with 102 campers at your doorstep and all the traffic that comes with it?" asked South Fork resident Verna Offret.

Recent plans to develop the South Fork area above Vivian Park in Provo Canyon have been a point of controversy between the city — which wants to open the area up

for everyone to enjoy — and residents who are afraid their neighborhoods will be invaded by motor homes if a proposed camping area is built.

As part of the Great Western Trail, Provo City plans to work with the U.S. Forest Service in developing the area to accommodate campers. The city owns a picnic site in the area and is working to change that into a camping area.

Provo City officials took the news media on a tour of South Fork and Big Springs Friday to show them what they plan to develop.

The Great Western Trail will go from Vivian Park up to Big Springs, over the top of the mountain ridge and down into Rock Canyon. The trail will be for hikers, horses,

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bicycles and cross-country skiers, but no motorized vehicles will be allowed.

"In the fall when the leaves change, it is the most beautiful canyon in the state," Provo Mayor Joe Jenkins said. "It shouldn't be a private preserve for a few people."

Officials plan to have the trail done next year and the campground completed the following year.

"That canyon is a tremendous asset to Provo City," Jenkins said. "Very few people have seen Big

Springs. We need to open it up so more can see it and use it."

Jenkins said the city will make every effort not to disturb the area.

But Offret said the county does not plan to widen the road up through South Fork because it is a dead-end road. "It's barely a two-lane road now," she said.

City officials, however, say the county hasn't made a decision on widening the South Fork road because they have not formally become a part of the proposed development at South Fork.

Offret said residents are upset because neither the county nor city told them about their plans to develop the area until they "happened to find out by chance."

The area by Big Springs was closed in recent years because of the watershed, she said. Only those with permission were allowed to enter the area and now "all at once it is just fine to put a park over the watershed."

City officials have said the watershed will remain intact with the proper type of facility in place.

Residents are also concerned that Provo City will not maintain the park. The city-owned picnic site has never been maintained and supervised, Offret said. "We see no reason they will change their mind."

Offret said, "Everyone I know (in the neighborhood) is unhappy with it."

Avalanche hits South Fork area

1-12-93
Utah County Commissioner Malcom Beck issued a local state of emergency proclamation this morning following an avalanche which buried several homes in the South Fork area of Provo Canyon, said Utah County Sheriff's spokesperson Ron Fernstedt.

Fernstedt told the media at 10:30 a.m. about the avalanche, but could not confirm how many people were trapped in their homes or if there were any injuries. He said the avalanche occurred near the Chalet, 3630 E. Provo Canyon, which is by Vivian Park.

He said the proclamation was signed because Utah County does not have the resources to dig the people and homes out of the snow.

GAS LEAK — The Provo Fire Department responded Monday to a hazardous material leak consisting of approximately 2,500 gallons of unleaded gasoline from an underground tank.

Battalion Chief Bob Headman reported the leak was detected at a

Police Beat

7-11 convenience store, 545 W. Columbia Lane, Provo, just before 5 p.m. He said store officials may have suspected the leak after an inventory of gasoline revealed there should have been more gasoline in the tank.

A back hoe was used to dig around the tank, which resulted in a release of an ignitable fuel/air mixture. When the bucket of the backhoe struck some rocks while digging, it sparked a flash fire and the digging was stopped. The backhoe operator quickly put out the fire by putting dirt on it.

Headman said the Utah County Health Department has been designated to clean up the hazardous material. He said test holes would most likely be drilled to determine how far the unleaded gasoline had spread through the ground. The

tank was 11 feet underground.

He said some gasoline may have reached the Provo River, which flows nearby. Headman said undetected leaks in the past reveal gasoline moves approximately five feet per year underground. The cost of repairing the tank, based on a national average, would be nearly \$1 million, he said.

CLOSED — The Utah Highway Patrol reports SR 189 through Provo Canyon was reopened late Monday after crews from the army and air national guard cleared away a weekend avalanche. However, the road was closed at 8 a.m. today as authorities attempted to blast more potential avalanche snow along SR 189.

Florence Forsyth, dispatcher at the Utah Department of Transportation, said crews would not know how long the road would be closed until they assessed the situation from the air.